

How to Succeed With Volunteers-In-Parks

60-Minute Module Series

DESIGNING JOBS

Training Guide

**National Park Service
Volunteers-In-Parks Program**



How To SUCCEED WITH VOLUNTEERS-IN-PARKS

60-Minute Module Series

Introduction
Program Planning
Needs Assessment
Motivation
Designing Jobs
Recruitment
Interviewing
Orientation
Training
Safety Management
Supervision
Delegation
Performance Reviews
Recognition

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INTRODUCTION

Designing jobs and writing job descriptions are the most important activities performed in volunteer management. The quality of the jobs you offer will directly impact your ability to attract the best volunteers available. If your jobs offer challenging, useful and thoughtful activities, people will say “yes” to your recruitment; otherwise, people know there are a thousand other ways to spend their time.

One of the key reasons people leave volunteer jobs is that they never had a clear understanding of what was expected. Without written job descriptions, most job information is shared verbally, leaving the door wide open for all sorts of misunderstandings, including potential liability issues. With written job descriptions, information can be communicated, reviewed, and re-evaluated periodically.

PURPOSE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The **Purposes** of this module are to sensitize both volunteers and paid staff to the significance of volunteer job design and to provide tools and methods to enhance their efforts in designing creative and effective volunteer jobs.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the importance of good volunteer job design.
2. Analyze the trends in volunteering and their impact on the design or redesign of volunteer jobs.
3. Design new volunteer jobs for their park.
4. Name the necessary components of written job descriptions.

GENERAL NOTES TO TRAINER

1. This workshop is in a suggested format. Feel free, however, to personalize it to meet your park needs.
2. This session may surface discussion both for and against developing written job descriptions for volunteers. However, under Director's Order #7, written job descriptions are required for all volunteers.

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Transparency Handout	Section	Method of Presentation	Time
T-1 H-1 T-2	Introduction Learning Objectives Key Concepts	Lecture	5 minutes
T-2 H-1 T-3 H-2	Concept 1 Job design is critical	Discussion/Activity	10 minutes
T-2 H-1 T-4 H-3	Concept 2 Volunteer trends affect job design	Discussion/Activity	10 minutes
T-2 H-1 H-4	Concept 3 Good job design helps attract good volunteers	Discussion/Activity	10 minutes
T-2 H-1 T-5 H-5 H-6 H-7	Concept 4 Include all essential elements in job descriptions	Discussion/Activity	20 minutes
T-2 H-1	Summary/Wrap-Up/ Evaluation	Summary Remarks	5 minutes

TOTAL TIME: 60 minutes

TRAINER'S NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Time: 5 minutes

T-1: Learning Objectives

Read purpose of written job descriptions (H-1) and summarize learning objectives (show T-1 overhead).

T-2: Key Concepts

This training is built on **four Key Concepts**.

H-1: Key Concepts

CONCEPT 1

Time: 10 minutes

Written job descriptions are critical to the ultimate success of a volunteer program.

T-2: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

T-3: Why Written Job Descriptions Are Mandatory

H-2: Why Written Job Descriptions Are Mandatory

Warm-up activity:

Ask participants to think about an experience where they worked without a written job description or where the job description and the actual job didn't match. Then ask them what kind of problems/benefits did that situation create?

Possible responses:

- Could never please self or others
- Could never celebrate completion
- Other staff/volunteers had varying ideas of what I did
- Very frustrating
- Could not prioritize work
- Was able to develop my own job

Key Learning:

If you do not have written job descriptions, volunteers will experience all of the above feelings working for you.

Questions to participants:

Other than the obvious value of giving a person a clear description of what is expected of them, what are some other benefits to having written job descriptions? (Get several ideas from participants and then compare them to your transparency "Why Written Job Descriptions Are Mandatory." Note the handout with the same title contains a brief explanation of each reason.)

CONCEPT 2

Time: 10 minutes

Understanding trends in volunteering will have an impact on job design and re-design in your park.

T-2: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

T-4: Trends in Volunteering

H-3: Trends in Volunteering

Presentation:

As we design or evaluate current jobs, we must do so in light of key changes and challenges occurring in the prospective volunteer community.

Discuss volunteer trends using the transparency. For each trend, ask participants how they are, or need to be, accommodating to these trends so as to be more attractive to prospective volunteers. Note handout on trends as an additional reference.

Example:

Trend: Most volunteers are employed.

Impact: Volunteers unavailable during work hours.
Volunteers must be recruited at their work site.

Response: Design jobs with flexible hours; send recruitment brochure to companies; develop lunch-time opportunities.

Consider the following potential responses as additions to those you may have already discussed:

- Designing of episodic (short-term) jobs
- Job sharing
- Group volunteer opportunities
- Targeted recruitment to professional, youth, retired, ethnic groups, etc.
- Offering flexible hours and locations
- Organizing a system of substitute volunteers

- Reimbursement of volunteer's expenses
- Breaking down committee work into time-limited task forces
- Efficient use of volunteer time
- Broadening the ways volunteers are used in the park (maintenance, administration, VIP program management, outreach, public affairs, etc.)
- Develop positions for evenings and weekends
- Develop jobs that can be done off site (e.g., in volunteer's home, office)

CONCEPT 3

Time: 10 minutes

Good volunteer job design can help attract and hold the best volunteers available.

T-2: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

H-4: Characteristics of Good Volunteer Jobs

Presentation:

The design of jobs for volunteers is very flexible. Be sure to take advantage of that flexibility to make sure that the jobs are fulfilling and that they offer variety, opportunities for growth, and a sense of completion. And don't forget to include elements of fun.

Question for participants:

If you had the complete flexibility to re-design your own job, however you wish, what would you change to make it more fulfilling for you? (Note that volunteer jobs can be both indoor and outdoor, cross division or district lines, vary in terms of schedule and hours per week, have elements of both physical and mental work, etc.)

Use your creativity to make sure the jobs you design for your volunteers are great ones!

Ask participants:

What kind of language would you use in your job description to encourage someone with strong social skills to volunteer at your visitor center desk? Or attract someone who is achievement oriented to work on your adopt-a-trail program? Or someone with decision-making skills to organize your commemorative event?

The language you use in describing your volunteer job can directly affect the type of volunteer you attract.

CONCEPT 4:

Time: 20 minutes

Job descriptions should be clearly written, and include all essential information.

T-2: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

T-6: Essential Elements of Written Job Descriptions

H-5: Essential Elements of Written Job Descriptions

H-6: Volunteer Job Description (Form)

H-7: Sample Volunteer Job Description

Presentation:

The job description is your planning tool to help your volunteers understand the results to be accomplished, the tasks that are involved, the skills that are required, and other important details about the job.

A job description provides an organized means of creating continuity in a job from one volunteer to the next. It is also a living document that will be revised as the program changes or the volunteer develops during his/her service.

The ideal job description contains the following elements: (note the handout samples)

Job Title

(Be creative — make it fun or professional or just descriptive, depending on whom you are trying to recruit, but make sure it does not mislead.)

Supervisor

(reporting requirements and supervisory assignment)

Work Location

(where volunteer will report to work)

Project Duration

(hours, dates, days, time commitment needed)

Description of Duties

(description of the work to be done)

Benefits to Volunteer

(e.g., job training for marketable skills, housing, park setting, reimbursed expenses, etc.)

Goal /Outcome of job

(why the position was created and how it relates to mission of the park)

Knowledge/Skills/Experience Desired:

(Qualifications required and desired)

Special Requirements:

(e.g., physical requirements, age requirements, certifications, etc.)

Ask participants:

Write a job description for a position that you would actually want a volunteer to fill. If you have completed a needs assessment as part of this training, use it to develop the job description

(After 10-15 minutes, spend some time discussing what participants have come up with to see if they are on the right track. Remember, the job description they write will be used in the next module for a targeted recruitment effort.)

SUMMARY/WRAP-UP/EVALUATION

Time: 5 minutes

T-2: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

Paraphrase:

Re-emphasize the importance of designing jobs that address priority park needs but also consider the current trends in volunteering and target the most qualified volunteers available. Good job design is the foundation of a solid volunteer program but it should also retain the flexibility necessary to undergo change as needed.

END 60-MINUTE TRAINING

SUGGESTIONS FOR EXPANDED ACTIVITIES

1. Identify the five trends having an impact on your park's success in attracting and retaining volunteers. Divide into five groups. Have each group look at one trend and recommend ways to respond to the impact. Have each group report back to the larger group.
2. Divide into three groups. Give each group the same generic job description. Have each one tailor the job description to a specific type of potential volunteer — one to working adults., one to a youth group, one to retired people. Have each group share with the larger group what they allowances they made in scheduling, description of duties, benefits, etc., to the original job descriptions.
3. Have each participant bring a sample volunteer job description they are currently using to class. After covering the essential elements of written job descriptions, have each go over their sample and make revisions, then share their revisions with the group and why they made them. Alternatively, have each participant trade their sample job description with someone else, then critique each other's.

RESOURCES

1. Ellis, Susan. *The Volunteer Recruitment Book*, "Chapter 2 – A Fresh Look at Volunteer Job Design," pg. 11-20, 1996. Order from Energize, Inc., 1-800-395-9800.
2. McCurley, Steve and Rick Lynch. *Volunteer Management: Mobilizing All the Resources of the Community*, Heritage Arts Publishing, 1996.
3. Wilson, Marlene. *The Effective Management of Volunteer Programs*, Volunteer Management Associates, 1976. 1-800-944-1470.